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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ISLAMABAD 001025

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TAGS: AEMR AMGT CASC KFLO PGOV PINR PK PREL
SUBJECT: SITUATION IN SWAT: MAY 12

REF: A. ISLAMABAD 1007
 1B. PESHAWAR 100

Classified By: Anne W. Patterson for reasons 1.4 (b), (d).

11. (SBU) Summary. Prime Minister Gilani called a special session of the National Assembly to discuss the situation in Swat and surrounding areas in Malakand District as well as the humanitarian situation of the growing number of IDPs. While most of the members agreed to support the government's actions, one Islamist coalition partner, Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam Fazlur (JUI-F) walked out of the debate until persuaded by the PM to return. End Summary.

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DEBATE
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12. (U) On May 11, Prime Minister Gilani called a special session of the National Assembly (NA) to discuss the situation in Malakand and the humanitarian situation surrounding the growing number of IDPs. Gilani explained that the President signed the Nizam-e-Adl regulation on April 13 out of respect for the area and as part of a peace agreement with militants, but the process has fallen apart. Since the writ of the government was not respected by the militants under the terms of the Nizam-e-Adl, the GOP had no choice but to employ military action. However, military action, he noted, is not a permanent solution.

13. (U) The PM also announced that the situation in Swat and Malakand Division are matters for the NWFP government, and that the provincial government will be in control of all operations there. A Special Support Group will be formed at the federal level to assist the NWFP government with the security and humanitarian needs of the area. The Special Support Group will have representatives from several ministries, including Health, Education, Interior, Defense, among others, and will be led by Lt General Nadeem Ahmad, who was chosen because of his exceptional work after the 2005 earthquake, first as deputy of the Federal Relief Commission and later as head of Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA). This Special Support Group has four main objectives: 1) registration of IDPs, 2) medical assistance, 3) IDP camp management, and 4) procurement and distribution of supplies (reftel A and septel).

REACTIONS TO THE SPECIAL ASSEMBLY
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¶4. (U) On May 10 in New York City, President Asif Ali Zadari reaffirmed Pakistan's resolve to defeat the Taliban. Speaking before a group of Pakistani-Americans, the President declared that every effort would be made to keep civilian losses at a minimum while fighting extremism. "We don't want one million dead", he said, citing the killings that occurred during anti-terror operations in Algeria and Afghanistan as examples. He told the group that Al Qaeda was like a monster and Pakistan would need international assistance to eliminate it.

¶5. (C) Following the debate, PolOff spoke on May 12 with Pakistan Muslim League (PML) parliamentarian Marvi Memon. Memon spoke on the floor of the National Assembly early May 12 on behalf of her opposition party. From those remarks, she stressed that her party completely supported the actions of the Pakistan Army in Swat and would continue to support actions "wherever there are extremists."

¶6. (C) Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) spokesman Siddiq ul-Farooq told PolOff that while his party was not happy with how the PPP-led GOP had made its decision to engage the Army in Swat, preferring an All Parties Conference to form a unanimous, consensus strategy, he deferred to the PML-N leader Nawaz Sharif's recent statement that his party would look forward and (for now) support the Army offensive. Ul-Farooq added the PML-N would support any actions against those "who attack the Constitution and writ of the government." Ul-Farooq was adamant: "We have no sympathy for those who have displaced the people." He called on the Army

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to "eradicate" the mercenaries and the "foreign hand" behind the criminality in Swat. However, he warned, the PML-N was only backing a "swift" campaign, which he defined as 4-6 weeks. Ul-Farooq encouraged the USG to support the GOP's decision at the diplomatic level, but further suggested that our public support be kept to a minimum so that the PPP-led GOP could avoid being accused of taking "the U.S.'s dictation."

¶7. (C) A parliamentarian from the Awami National Party (ANP), the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) ruling party, told PolOff that his party was being overwhelmed by the issue of IDPs, the focus of the special session of the National Assembly. He expressed the hope that the session on May 12 would find some answers to the IDP issue.

¶8. (C) Partisan politics came into play during the sessions when the Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam Fazlur (JUI-F) party leader, Fazlur Rehman, at one point walked out of the May 11 session only to return again after being persuaded to do so by the PM and the Minister of Interior, Rehman Malik. The ANP parliamentarian accused the JUI-F of being "blackmailers" and said that Fazlur Rehman walked out to squeeze more from the government. In a public statement, Fazlur Rehman declared that "despite being a government ally, the federal government did not take us into confidence with regard to the launching of the military operations in Swat and Malakand."

¶9. (C) A JUI-F parliamentarian told PolOff that it was wrong for the country to use violence against its own people, and said that most of the victims were innocent bystanders. He asked how the Pakistan military could be successful in Swat if America couldn't fix Afghanistan using force. The parliamentarian stressed that his party was not a supporter of Sufi Mohammad, leader of the Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi (TNSM), or his son-in-law Maulana Fazlullah, leader of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and that, indeed, their followers were a minority. The JUI-F walked out of the session because the military started its operations before all the political players were taken into confidence. He welcomed the in-camera session but said he had no hope that anything positive will come out of it. The parliamentarian emphasized

that the GOP needs to focus on negotiations and confidence building. The JUI-F will not/not pull out of the coalition at this point because of military operations.

FROM PESHAWAR

¶10. (C) On the margins of a May 11 Consulate Peshawar reception, multiple local contacts reinforced the point that insufficient capacity at IDP registration centers is the most immediate problem the government faces in managing the large numbers of displaced residents flowing out of the northern NWFP. Food and other supplies are available, but not enough people are on hand to handle the mechanics of registration, which is a prerequisite to receiving assistance. The director of one of Peshawar's local universities told PO that his institution is sending senior students to lend clerical support at the camps. UNHCR's Peshawar representative Mohammad Adar feared that the UN system would not be able to cope in the coming weeks with the growing numbers of IDPs. NWFP Social Welfare Minister Sitara Ayaz expressed concern about water and sanitation. An outbreak of disease in the camps, Ayaz noted, with the onset of summer heat, could be devastating. Academic institutions in northern NWFP, including Malakand University with 1600 students, have closed, leaving resident students stranded and cut off from contact with their families. NWFP's universities are banding together to take care of these students and are planning to disburse them into other universities at least through the summer and cover tuition, lodging and meals.

¶11. (C) NWFP Chief Minister Amir Haider Khan Hoti accompanied PML-N leader Nawaz Sharif on a visit to an IDP camp in Mardan - a Hoti family stronghold - on May 11 (reftel B). NWFP PML-N president Pir Sabir Shah and local journalists gave Consulate conflicting stories as to the

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reasons for Sharif's visit to the camp, but agreed that it was a PML-N initiative that Hoti (affiliated with the ANP) joined after being asked for NWFP government logistical and security support for the visit. According to Pir Sabir Shah, PML-N will set up a hundred-million rupee (1.25 million U.S. dollars) fund for IDP relief efforts, with the aim of setting up a camp of its own for the IDPs.

¶12. (C) PML-N is not the only entity looking to provide funds directly to the IDPs. Consulate contacts praise the efforts of al-Khidamat, charity wing of Jamiat e-Islami (JI) since the beginning of the campaign in Buner in late April; it has provided food, non-food items (NFIs), and other services such as pairing up IDPs with suitable host families as an alternative to entering a camp. Both PPP and PPP-Sherpao are reportedly considering setting up direct assistance to the IDPs as well. Press reports that spontaneous fundraising drives have begun among Pakistanis to gather resources to provide food and NFIs, leading the NWFP police to threaten a crackdown against unregistered groups requesting donations without providing accountability. Contacts in the police assured Consulate that their primary concern in the crackdown is the pocketing of donated funds by these organizations, not their diversion to militants.

MILITARY OPERATIONS

¶13. (C) In Swat, the Pakistani military finally recaptured the building in Said Sharif housing the offices of the Malakand Division Commissioner, the Swat District Coordinating Officer (DCO), and the Swat District Police Officer (DPO). The building was burned and the records in the office were destroyed, either in the fighting or by the militants.

¶14. C) According to a Peshawar Consulate contact, in northern

Buner, the Frontier Corps peacefully occupied Pir Baba after
militants fled in the direction of Gul Qand; Sultanwas and
the passes to Swat remain unsecured.

PATTERSON